

Notes on Quiz #2: Egyptian Empires

1. The Nile delta is found in
 - a. Nubia
 - b. Kush
 - c. Lower Egypt
 - d. Upper Egypt

The delta is where the Nile empties into the Mediterranean. This is downstream (Lower Egypt).

2. All of the following are true of the pyramids EXCEPT:
 - a. They are associated with the earliest period of united Egypt, the Old Kingdom
 - b. They were intended to protect the mortal remains of the pharaoh buried within
 - c. They could only have been constructed by alien gods from outer space
 - d. The largest and most famous, the Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops), took 23 years to build

The pyramids were visible symbols of the pharaoh's divine rule, unifying the people's shared identity and religion. They represented power unlike any human's and so reinforced the pharaoh's divinity. Pyramids were also the ultimate in prestige and luxury, which was controlled by the pharaohs, and so showed precedence over all classes and over past kings as well. They employed huge numbers of people, impressing the people directly with his power and keeping them busy between harvests. They served as temples for the worship of pharaohs after death.

Like all monumental building (e.g., the ziggurats) they displayed Egypt's (and so the pharaoh's) immense economic power—to its own people and to outsiders as well, as well as serving as a visual focal point for a strong central identity as Egyptians and a home to a protective patron deity, in this case the pharaoh as a manifestation of Horus.

3. Akhenaten was famous for
 - a. religious reforms focusing on the supremacy of one god, Aten
 - b. having no wife
 - c. being born in Arizona before moving to Babylonia
 - d. sharing the throne with his cousin Amenhotep

Akhenaten was an Egyptian pharaoh of the New Kingdom (during the 18th Dynasty). He and his queen, Nefertiti, sought to bring about religious reform in Egypt by shifting the focus of worship to Aten, calling him more important than the other gods. This brought about a form of polytheism in which one god is greatly predominant called henotheism. Akhenaten pushed the exclusive worship of Aten by changing his regnal name from Amunhotep IV to Akhenaten, building a new royal city sacred to Aten, and instituting new rituals and priesthoods.

In so doing, Akhenaten sought to undo the shift in religious power from the pharaohs, who had held unquestionable religious authority in the Old Kingdom, to the priests, who now held much greater power in the New Kingdom. The priests emphasized the significance of Amun-Ra, the sun god, in the pharaoh's rule, so by associating the kingship with Aten he sought to wrest power from the priests. It was too late for that, however: the authority of the priests was now too well established, and the pharaoh's power too diminished from the absolute in the New Kingdom. Egyptian religion reverted the control of the priests after the deaths of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, as signified by the regnal name of his son and eventual successor, Tutankhamun.

4. The collection of spells that was wrapped around a mummy is known as
- “The Spells of Ra”
 - “The Tale of Sinuhe”
 - “Book of the Dead”
 - “Osiris Among the Shades”

The Book of the Dead was what was used to ensure the passage of the spirit to the lands of the dead.

5. All of the following are true of the Semitic invaders who dominated Egypt between the Middle and New Kingdoms EXCEPT:
- The Egyptians called them the Hyksos, meaning “foreign rulers”
 - They embraced and preserved Egyptian culture
 - They ruled peacefully over Egypt for many thousands of years
 - They fought using horses and chariots, bronze weapons, and complex bows

The Hyksos only ruled for about a hundred years. Despite being foreigners from the Semitic east, they embraced and promoted Egyptian culture and religion enthusiastically.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. What do you think made unification possible in Egypt, when it was impossible in Sumer?

The main point here is that the city-states of Sumer were in competition for limited resources, and so remained in rivalry with each other and were often hostile. In Egypt, however, the environment provided plenty for all, so there was no need to compete for resources, and everyone had in common the protection and nurturing of the gods—eventually manifested as a single god-king.